7: Thompson--373 [2] J-4 (no date) 1937 Laotians
116, 533

"There is almost no Westerner with soul so dead that he has not succumbed to the charms of Laotian music. The occasions for hearing it are multiple. Every festival and ceremony as well as impromptu meetings serve as excuse for a song fest. Their music has been lyrically described as 'the purest manifestation of the Laotian soul' (1)

1. Le Boulanger, P., Histoire du Laos Français (Paris, 1930), p. 119.

and it even made Billotey forget 'all the earth, those I love, and indeed myself.' (2) The

2. Billotey, P., Sao-Keo (Paris, 1930), p. 138.

few instruments that exist, notably the khène, are of Malayan or Chinese origin. Both sexes share the honours as singers and improvisors. Songs are taken from poems which are the country's folklore, and the improvisations are recitatives either in Siamese or the vernacular. They are repeated like litanies, with a ritualistic intonation that requires much training as well as stamina, for these recitals often last twelve hours. Everything is grist to their improvising mill. The old is mixed with the new with a caustic verve and licence which is both crude and artistic. There is no method of notation, only memory and routine guide the musicians in selecting from their large repertoire."

10: d'Orleans--277 [3] T-3 (1891-92) 1894 Laos
116, 202, 212, 533, 563, 802 Ethnic subgroups

"From their [LSS: Kha boatmen, in the service of a Laotian] own account, they have no special songs, but they use the Laotian music.

Writing is unknown to them; but they keep their accounts, or send their messages by means of small pieces of bamboo, marked with notches which are made at closer or longer intervals according to the signification that has been arranged. This is like our bakers' sticks. (1)

1. M. Harmand has found amongst the peoples of the south of Indo-China the same method of correspondence that Father Crabouillet discovered amongst the Lolos of Setchoun. (Cf. 'Note on the Writing of the Indo-Chinese Khas,' by M. P. Lefèvre-Pontalis, L'Anthropologie, Mars-Avril, 1892.) "

10: d'Orleans--279 T-3 (1891-92) 1894 Laos
116, 522, 533, 563, 832 Ethnic subgroups

"They [LSS: Kha boatmen in the service of a Laotian] are in good spirits, and chat from one pirogue to the other, or sing in answer to the women, who are bathing at the water's edge. The men inquire if they are married, and invite them to follow them, in case their hearts are free. The songs, often improvised, are upon subjects referring to love. They also try to frighten the buffaloes that, half hidden in the water, only show their back and the head which they hold horizontally; but the great stupid animals pay no attention to the shouts, they let us pass, contemplating us with an air of fatalistic resignation; but they do not move. In the evening our boatmen ask permission to go to the village. We grant it and follow them, however a few are left behind to keep watch over the pirogues."

10: d'Orleans--308 [2] T-3 (1891-92) 1894 Laos
116, 533, 562, 832

"The men gossip with the girls, give them flowers, play to them, recite verses, sing them songs and play at cards with them, but never dance with them. Men and women walk through the streets singing, in groups where the two sexes are apart, or sit opposite the one to the other at the entrance to the pagodas. I shall have an opportunity of recurring to these peculiar love-makings, and I have noticed that, in contradistinction to what generally takes place in the East, here it is the young women who dominate the men, who go through the form of beating them, if necessary, and who condescend to cast an amorous glance at them or to respond to their compliments."

10: d'Orleans--370-372 T-3 (1891-92) 1894 Laos-1-2
116, 524, 533, 584

[LSS: in Paklay] "In the evening the Siamese lieutenant invites us to a particularly original fête. Upon a small terrace in front of our verandah sit a dozen young girls, their [371] busts draped in gold-thread scarves of native make. Opposite them a dozen young men take their places. A man carrying a Laotian organ, which he has difficulty in setting up, follows them. The pipes of the organ are so long--nearly 14 feet--that he is finally obliged to cut a hole in the roof, but the damage can be easily repaired.

We are about to assist at a good game of repartee, between the men and the women, a sort of literary joust.

Each camp has its champion. On one side a young man, with a rather expressive face, contorts his facial muscles so as to produce every sort of mimicry. Opposite is an old woman with a wrinkled and pockmarked skin, though her ugliness down not prevent her, from possessing the gift of quick retort. The organ plays continually on a grave key in a sort of bass, while the persons present accompany it by clapping their hands at certain measures.

When the woman rejects her questioner's propositions,the latter takes two small candles, made of a little wax coiled round a few threads, holds them fixed with the thumb nail, and gesticulates, turning his hands and moving his arms in passes like those of a hypnotiser. To these movements correspond certain shruggings of the shoulders, contractions of the mouth, distortions of the nose and wrigglings in consonance with the

measure of the organ music. When the grimaces are funny the women mark their satisfaction by bursting into peals of laughter.

Of the group of young men some interrupt to support or excite their champion, or they repeat a refrain in chorus. It is generally some popular phrase, [372] the meaning of which is not clear to either the Siamese lieutenant or the interpreter. There is also a series of exclamations, which one repeats twice, these cries corresponding to our shouts of encouragement: 'Keep it up,' 'don't flinch,' 'steady,' and the like: Aou'. aou! aoua! ioua! pemma! sempa! satna!

Sometimes the singing is in crescendo time and the singer seems to be in a hurry. The company becomes excited, encouraging and urging him on. A brass bowl is continually passed round, flowing over with tchoum-tchoum. The animation becomes greater and greater and the party breaks up amid a general hubbub. [LSS: for the text of some of the dialogue, see Laotians, category 539, p. 372-373.] "

69: Lewis T-5 (1950) 1951 AM1 Indochina
Laotians AM8

403 electricians hugged each other, and, enchanted by the din, the
527 audience began to drift away from the theatre and make for the dancing floor.

527 The second attraction in order of popularity was a love-court. A
584 quadrangular arrangement of tables had been formed, covered by a
782 thatched roof raised on posts decorated with woven bamboo
793 representations of animals, weapons and phallic emblems. Seated round the tables in the interior of the square were the girls, and their suitors sat facing them. Between the couples had been placed offerings of food, brought by the girls. Originally a tribute to some ancient, forgotten fertility god, a primeval Thai Venus, the offerings would be given, next day, to the bonzes. All through the night the bantering of witticisms, the singing and the exchange of improvised verse would go on, accompanied by the accordion-like
[534] wheezings of the Kène, the Stone Age gourd pipes of Laos. Sometimes through a happy fault in the circuit the splutter and bellow of the loud-speakers would suddenly lapse, and you heard the beehive dronings of the communal love-making, the kènes, and the voice of the presiding bonze, preaching continually in an archaic, incomprehensible language from the wicker cage into which he had been fastened. The cage symbolized the protection of his religion from these earthly distractions. As soon as inspiration failed he would be relieved by the next on the rota of preachers, waiting now to take his place.

584 Love-courts are the accepted preliminary to the consummation of
[533] affairs of the heart, which — despite European conviction that
576 romantic love is a Western invention — are accompanied in Laos by much versifying and mild, self-imposed frustrations. When, for instance, a well-known beauty is wooed by a number of suitors, a serenading match may be arranged on the veranda of her house to permit her to test under competitive conditions the poetic and musical capabilities of each of them. Complete pre-marital freedom
[836] is recognized, but much outward reserve is maintained. There is a time and place for everything. It is incorrect, for example, to

115: Le Boulanger--76 H-4 (no date) 1931 (1300-1700) AM1 Indochina Laotians AM8

Era of prosperity. It is a certain fact that the country was perfectly happy at this time. Feeling protected by a dreaded sovereign, the Laotians cultivated their native unconcern which resulted at once from the moderate nature of their /119/ desires and from the fertility of their soil. Living without any dire needs, all things were for them a ground for rejoicing, and their peaceful character naturally inclined them towards the satisfactions of the spirit and particularly towards music which constitutes the purest manifestation thereof (1). 175*

1. Cf. M. Galerne, Courrier musical, 1925.

Music in Lan-Xang. They therefore held song in special favor and mingled it with dances whose expressive mimicry was related to the pantomime dances of India. The plots were based almost exclusively on love, which Laotians took pleasure in exalting under its most variegated aspects. They sometimes took the form of charming "courts of love" which remind one of those held in our French provinces in the Middle Ages, were sometimes given on the occasion of funeral ceremonies which were in no way envisaged in the same atmosphere of sadness as they are among us, or sometimes on the occasion of the inauguration of a pagoda, the construction of a house or the harvesting of a crop. 533 535

The khene. In all these circumstances either instrumental or vocal music had a place. /120/ The most common instrument was the khene, which is still widely used today. The khene is "formed of a series of bamboo tubes which are small in diameter, of various decreasing lengths and arranged in pairs, like two large pipes of Pan, usually in seven consecutive rows. The bamboo tubes are joined together by two half-gourds, fastened with wax, which form an air chamber and are provided with a small circular orifice which serves as a mouthpiece. Inside the bamboo tubes are pierced by holes, some of which let the air in, while the others are blocked with the fingers as the need arises in order to obtain notes, while the palm of the hand grasps the curve of the half-gourd. The air which elicits the notes strikes against metal reeds which are inserted in the upper part of each bamboo tube (1). 534

1. Cf. M. Galerne, Courrier musical, 1925.

534 "The oddest thing about the functioning of the khene is the simultaneity of several notes and their absolute continuity. This results from the fact that air can pass, depending on the fingering, through several tubes at the same time, and that the player breathes in and out by turns. . . . The sounds of the khene, whose /121/ combinations are based on the chief 'harmonics,' are very sweet and are in between those of the harmonium and those of the accordion (1).

1. M. Galerne, op. cit.

"With the khene there was a series of secondary instruments also made of bamboo -- a large flute, a flute with a reed or kind of flageolet, and a flute with a single hole. The orchestra was completed by the ranavastron (2), the gong, the gong-vong or sort of

2. The ranavastron is found in all the countries of the Far East. Invented in Ceylon, it is the ancestor of all instruments played with a bow.

xylophone with a double circular sector, cymbals, a tom-tom and finally bells which were primarily designed to ward off the evil 'Phis.'

533 "As for vocal muxic, it manifested itself in singsong recitatives or choral chants with fascinating musical lines." Even today, thanks to the "French peace," groups of boys and girls, their heads garlanded with flowers, can be seen walking in the villages on moonlit nights and repeating refrains with a harmonious rhythm in unison after verses which have a narrative quality and are usually improvised by the soloist (3).

3. The scale such as we conceive of it does not exist in Laotian music. One nevertheless has the sensation of three distinct "modes": one which has no thirds or sevenths, another which lacks only sevenths, and a third which has a diatonic appoggiatura in fifths. (Cf. M. Galerne, op. cit. /Courrier musical, 1925/.)

/122/ Three distinct characteristic rhythms can be counted: the Love Song which is improvised or handed down by tradition from generation to generation; the Pirogue-men's Song which has

a certain basic licentiousness and is accented by a final sharp cheer; and the singsong in the strict sense which has no great development and to which were applied words, at the whim of the man or woman singing, to celebrate a welcome or any kind of event (1). 533

1. M. Galerne, op. cit. /Courrier musical, 1925/

Here is one of the love songs, "from which springs all the sentimentally exquisite poetry of the Laotian soul":

The moon is rising; come, o my beloved, and speak to us under the rays of the twinkling star;

O flowers, which exhale your pure perfumes at this hour, come and tell me of his good qualities;

O my heart, why do you beat so strong?

I think of my beloved.

Come, come quickly; I am alone under the roof of my house; why do you leave me thus?

I am languishing, my beloved. Come, then, and press this heart which beats so strongly for you and ask it for the essence of my thoughts.

Come, come quickly.

/123/ Page 123 is devoted to an illustration: "A khene player." --Translator/ /124/

We must regretfully cut short this rapid excursion into the melodious garden of these people who are instinctively artistic and who lost the joy of living together with their independence through the fault of their leaders' tearing one another to pieces, and also because there cannot for long be any place here below for individuals, as well as for peoples, whom the Germans themselves, although they are nevertheless deeply musical, have scornfully called "mandolin players" (1).

1. The Laotian theater scarcely deserves mention. It derives exclusively from the Cambodian and Siamese theater /177/ and is likewise made up of extremely long plays -- epics, warrior legends and romances, and religious tales taken from the Vedas, the Ramayana or the Mahabharata. "To this repertoire are joined the purely Kmer plays and various adaptations of Burmese origin, which are played in classical costumes and in which a good bit of comedy and modernism 545

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Fig. 8. A Khene player.

/Facing p. 122/

000 If death had not placed a brutal term on his wanderings a few weeks later, the serious Mouhot might also have been the first man to question the impassive Buddhas on the mysterious past of this remote land, felt the infinite charm of its melodious nights when the khenes give voice to their moving chords, and -- who can say? -- sung the grace of the pretty girls with bare and gilded breasts who in their carefree way weave multicolored scarves under their flowered huts.

105 He contents himself with noting rapidly: "Fortunately this is not like Siam, and I can get help from the natives. . . . The /225/ Laotians are peaceable, submissive, patient, sober, trusting, credulous, superstitious, faithful, simple and naive. They naturally /685/ hold robbery in horror. The story is told that one of their kings had thieves fried in a cauldron of boiling oil, but since the ravages of the last wars a certain number of thieves are beginning to be found among them who have been driven to rapine by poverty or by the spirit of vengeance.

/685/ "Besides cultivating rice and maize the Laotians grow batatas, /241/ gourds, red peppers, melons and other vegetables. . . . They sell /438 the Chinese ivory and pelts from tigers and wild animals. They 434/ also trade gold dust, silver and copper ore, gamboge, cardamom, lac, wax, dyeing wood, cotton, silk and all the products of their soil for heavy porcelain, small glassware and other small commodities of Chinese industry.

"The Laotians are not made for war. Ever since the beginning they have been subjected to the neighboring kings, and have never been able to shake off this heavy yoke.

"They seem to be more industrious than the Siamese and to /101/ possess more of the spirit of adventure and trade. Although both peoples /226/ have many points of resemblance, both physical and moral, the Laotians can nevertheless be distinguished by their dialect and especially by their customs, which are simpler and more amiable.

533 "...Their music is very sweet, harmonious and sentimental. 101 Only three people are needed to make a melodious concert. One plays a bamboo organ, the second signs romances with the accent of a man inspired, and the third strikes strips of a sonorous wood together in rhythm, the clicking sounds of which have a striking effect" (1).

1. This praise of Laotian music should be compared with the

judgment which he pronounced in October 1858 on Siamese 533
music, in connection with a dramatic presentation at the 101
court of Bangkok: "Deafening music served as the overture to the play. The orchestra distinguished itself by a dreadful racket and a complete absence of harmony... the same musical phrase was played to us for five full hours by the clock, to the great content of the king and his courtesans. I can almost believe that the whole science of music in Siam is limited to this terrible melody, for the other presentations which I was condemned to attend elsewhere always used these unique and discordant notes."

He left Luang-Prabang on August 9 to continue his entomo- 000
logical research in the valley of the Nam-Khane. The fifteenth, "on a splendid night," he camped on the bank of the river, but no matter how "charming" the countryside seemed he felt "sad, pensive and unhappy." "I /227/ miss my native soil. I should like a little life. The continued solitude weighs on me."

On September 3 he reached the village of Na-Le where he killed a tigress and went on a rhinoceros hunt. He was recalled to Luang-Prabang on the 18th by an order of the "Senate" (he does not say why) and turned back on October 15, but after three days of march he had to stop for he was stricken by a violent access of fever. On the 29th he traced this supreme exclamation in the log of his route with a trembling hand: "Have pity on me, O my God!... ." On November 7 he fell into a coma which was intermittently broken by delerium, and on the 10th he passed away about seven o'clock in the evening.

His remains were buried on the following day, "in accordance 114
with the European ceremony," by his faithful servants Phrai and Dong. Three months later the latter brought back his collections, his effects and his papers, together with their account of their master's last moments, to the French consul in Bangkok (1).

1. Cf. the Ferdinand de Lanoye edition, published by Librairie Hachette et Cie., 1882.

Mouhot's tomb (1867). The pious homage deserved by this 000
precursor, this hardy pioneer who fell victim to his devotion to science, was paid to him in April 1867 by the leader of the expedition to explore the Mekong which was organized /228/ by Admiral

as a blessing. 791

One fact worthy of note is that the "Phi-pop"--men, women and even adolescents--are extremely intelligent folk with lively eyes and full of a strong will and energy. They know [Illustration here] a host of recipes and therapeutic formulas which have been handed down to them by their parents. They might be described as bonesetters or people who have medicine as a sideline, and who act on weak minds and nervous temperaments by the power of suggestion. "Phi-pop" women and girls are usually quite pretty. 755 156

One of the methods most widely used to gain the favor of the "Phis" is to play deafening music. 755 533

"It is not at all unusual to hear diabolic and uninterrupted music in a Laotian house for several days and nights running. In this house there is a person who is seriously ill. All the noise is designed to frighten or to assuage the spirit in the sick person's body and to persuade or force it to [153] leave the body of the invalid. The sick person generally succumbs under the waves of this curative but noisy harmony" (1).

(1) Le Laos français, op. cit. [Lieutenant-colonel Tournier (Superior Resident in Laos), "Notice sur le Laos français," in Revue Indochinoise, Hanoi, 1900.] [113]

Religion of the Thais. They have neither pagodas nor bonzes, but practice ancestor worship and have a great veneration for the "Spirits or Genii," to whom they make offerings on all occasions. 771 769

In the first room of the house there stands a bamboo altar. The "Spirits" or "Phis" of dead forbears are supposed to inhabit this altar, which is composed of two different levels, the highest one for the male Phis and the other for the female Phis. At its foot there is an opening covered with an elliptical wooden ornament shaped like a mouth. It is there, on this "ancestors' mouth," that the head of the family places offerings and prayers, especially when a member of the family is sick. In principal an animal is never killed without some scrap of food or a few drops of blood being offered to the ancestors' mouth.

"Spirits, whether genii or demons, are everywhere--in the sky, on earth, in the forests, in the water. They are the object of a widespread cult over which individuals who might be described as 776 793 755

764 the fire collapsed. In a great shower of sparks, in the middle of a
787 long blue flame, the coffin tottered and fortunately leaned to the right side. The dead man's spirit was satisfied, and it was also an excellent omen for the prosperity of the Muong.

764 [214] Now the pyre, the catafalque, the coffin, the corpse and all were nothing more than an immense live fire, an incandescent mass which projected bizarre flashes on the motley crowd and gave to it, in the evening twilight beside the great river, a phantasmagorical air.

From time to time one of the posts of the canopy could be seen in the center of the fire, rising towards the sky like a gigantic torch. The coffin toppled, and for the space of a second the corpse seemed to appear grimacing and twisting in the middle of the flames, like a salamander.

The whole fire fell in, and the crackling noises lessened. Two or three tongues of flame shot out here and there, only to be extinguished immediately. The coals finished burning themselves out, and soon nothing was left of the pyre and of the whole edifice, so bizarrely decorated, but a pile of gray ashes in the middle of which a few whitish and incompletely burned bone fragments could still be seen. With night the last gleams of the pyre disappeared, the last coals went out and the only light remaining was that of the twinkling stars.

Early the next day the bonzes went to the spot where the pyre had stood. They collected the ashes which had been cooled by dew during the night and then, after throwing a few handfuls to the four winds, they used the rest to draw a crude human face on the ground. The few whitish bones which were still left and which crumbled at the touch were collected and placed in a jar of ordinary earth, which would be buried in the enclosure of a pagoda at the foot of a sacred "ficus."

[585] Later on, since the deceased had been well-to-do and his family was wealthy, the latter would be helped by the people of the province to build a brick pyramid called "That" inside the pagoda enclosure.

A few ashes in an urn and, in some, the memory of a great celebration and a few good meals...and that is all that remained of the man who had long been a great leader in his province.

•533 Music. "Instrumental music holds a place of honor in Laos.
534 The instruments are few in number, and are of Malayan and Chinese origin.

534 meters in diameter. By striking the gongs with these two hammers or brushing against the gongs with them, musicians succeed in playing certain local airs which, although their sounds are somewhat sharp to the ear, are nonetheless harmonious at a distance.

"These various instruments are frequently joined together to form orchestras which play in comparative harmony.

533 "There is no method of musical notation. Memory and routine are the performers' only guides. Their memory is adequate enough and their mastery of the instruments sufficient to provide their listeners with a fairly varied repertory." (Le Laos français.)

[216] Songs and singers. Songs and improvisations enjoy a great vogue in Laos, and are an obligatory feature of every feast and every ceremony. They also serve to keep up the spirits of boatmen and to break the monotony of traveling.

Talents as singers and improvisers are generally shared by both sexes. The same person will often have both these abilities, which are to some extent the heritage of certain families.

538 The songs consist of poems which form a kind of anthology or "Folk-Lore" of the land. Everyone knows some snatches of these
533 stories, which they hear over and over again without tiring of them and which are handed down intact or embellished with new parts from parents to their children and from the old to the young.

The improvisations are recitatives in the vulgar tongue or in Siamese which are composed according to circumstances. Certain songs are delivered in a language unknown to the Laotians, but which they repeat like the litanies of Buddhism with, so to speak, a ritual cadence and intonation.

Singers and improvisers of both sexes are called Mô-Lam or Mô-Kab-Lam, and the poems which they recite are called Kam-Kong. These artists are very well trained and are capable of singing aloud for twelve hours at a stretch without showing any trace of fatigue or lassitude, whereas even the hardiest kene players cannot blow on their instruments for more than about an hour.

Love stories, invocations, inspirations, memories, news items, legends, prophecies, voyages, catastrophes, etc. are all matters for improvisation. All these songs are arranged, amplified or distorted to suit the particular turn of mind, the fancy, the spirit or the merriment of the author and to suit the occasion and the moment.

538 With his somewhat caustic but not malicious verve, the improviser excels in mixing the modern with the ancient. He takes particular

Kha

586
684 and to the family of his accomplice. In a case of flagrante delicto, however, he has the right to kill the guilty parties.

[462] Kha women, when married, are renowned for their austerity, and their conduct is usually exemplary. Moreover, they are very soon disfigured by precocious and repeated childbearing, as well as by the difficult work which they do, and after two or three years of marriage the poor women are no longer tempting to anyone.

764 Deaths. Cremation is not practiced by the Khas. They bury their dead in as summary a fashion as the Lus, and for a few days bring food to the freshly filled grave. Then the latter is abandoned.

When a chief or a rich man is to be buried, the body is placed in a coffin hewn from a tree trunk.

181 Character. Like all oppressed peoples, the Khas are reserved and timid. They are afraid of innovations and new faces. But in intimate gatherings with their own people they are just as merry and love music, dances, celebrations and festivals just as much as the other peoples of Laos.

535 Music and dancing. They know certain dances imitated from
536 the Lus, pantomimes (1) which resemble the I-Ke of the Burmese.

(1) They also have the habit of performing scenes in pantomime, rather like extremely primitive ballets. We shall describe one such scene:

"A group of girls, guarded by two respectable men, are pursuing the pleasures of dancing. A rogue comes up and tries to make off with one of the girls. After a few unsuccessful attempts he succeeds in eluding the guards' vigilance, jumps forward to seize the girl on whom he has designs, and clasps her in his arms. But his happiness is too much for him and he falls senseless at the feet of the girl he wanted to abduct." (Le Laos français.) - [Lieutenant-colonel Tournier (Superior Resident in Laos), "Notice sur le Laos français," in Revue Indochinoise, Hanoi, 1900.]

533 and [255] singsong legends in which the r's and k's roll out in terrible fashion. They also have songs which they accompany on flutes, clarinets and single-stringed violins. Some tribes have xylophones, these being instruments composed of bamboo tubes of [Illustration here] different thickness and length, each of which produces a tone varying with its size. It will be seen that by striking with a [256] stick of wood on these tubes, a combination of more or less harmonious sounds will

Kha

result. But the Kha ideal is to possess a battery of gongs of different sizes and timbres, and with these they manage to obtain quite perfect chords. 533

Industry. Withdrawn in their mountains where they live in small isolated groups, the Khas use their leisure time to make many basket-work and hollow-ware products which have a mark of elegance and a great deal of delicacy. Other tribes make paper from wood pulp, weave mats from rattan and bamboo bark, etc. They use all these products in trade. 433

Finally, certain Khas exploit deposits of iron ore and transform it into farming implements, while others wash gold-bearing sands. 316

In general, although the Khas are industrious they work only to procure what is strictly indispensable. They cannot resign themselves to staying away from home for any length of time and dread any stay in the low country, which they say is unhealthy for them. Since they have particular aptitudes for woodcutting, however, they have been successfully employed to cut teak wood in the forests on the right bank of the Mekong which are situated in Siamese territory. But it must be admitted that there they are in mountainous country and in the midst of forests, as in their native region. 461 [313]

The Khas of southern Laos. In southern Laos Khas are found who differ very little from those of Upper Laos. We shall not concern ourselves with them, but shall deal briefly with the many more numerous ones who have particular mores and customs.

The Djarais, the Rades, the Bahnars, the Cedangs, the Peunongs, the Rognaos (1), etc. are the principal types of these Kha tribes. [619]

(1) See Appendix XVIII.

which for the most part are still independent.

These people are proud, large and muscular, supple, trained in all forms of bodily exercise, bold, warlike and brave. 181

These qualities, moreover, have been developed by their peculiar way of [257] [Illustration] [258] [Blank page] [259] life. 567
Accustomed to hunting slaves from which they extracted large profits by selling them on the banks of the Mekong, these Khas have had to resort to continual expeditions in order to obtain their human game. 721

For many long years, in fact, they could acquire [Illustration here] the gongs, buffalo, metals, textiles, etc. which they needed only by selling captives, generally Annamites, whom they went and 567

101 [261] [Illustration] [262] [Blank page] [263] As far as marriages, deaths, etc. go, we find practically the same customs among the Kha tribes of southern Laos as among their fellows in northern Laos.

231 It should be noted that the Rades breed a variety of small horses
439 which are highly prized in Annam, Laos and Siam.

533 "These Khas love music and dancing. Their favorite instruments are gongs and bells.

534 "A set of gongs consists of seven, nine or twelve single ones. Made of copper and often very beautiful, these gongs take the shape of a cylinder from forty to eighty centimeters in diameter, only one end of which is closed by a vibrating plate. The cap worn by our judges and professors, although on a smaller scale, gives a fairly clear idea of the shape of these instruments. A few of the instruments are artfully cast and ornamented with much elegance. There is a solid ring about a third of the way along the gong's length which is part and parcel with the rest of the gong and makes it possible to hang it up on a side of the house, at about the height of a man's head, by means of a rattan thong fastened to the frame.

"The performers stand facing the battery and pummel it with their fists, taking care to strike the vibrating plate in the center so that it will emit a true tone. This procedure produces perfect musical notes, which are accompanied by the dull resonances of the tom-toms and the sharp sonorities of the bells made of a copper and tin alloy. The gongs bring a high price, and when it is a fine one a complete series is worth from 1,200 to 1,500 francs.

"In some villages the performers each take an instrument and hold it in a sling fastened to their shoulder, then form a column in single file. This Indian-style procession marches from the center of the house towards one of its extremities, striking more and more gently as it moves away from its point of departure. Then it returns to the center, unleashing a compensating crescendo. The maneuver begins again towards the other end of the house, and the musical promenade continues until the musicians are exhausted.

535 "When the Khas begin to play and perform the Kimlang (a very
272 stirring war dance) and the warriors grow excited from dancing and
579 from drinking rice wine, it is wise to make them stop as soon as they begin to pick up their weapons, for when drunk with alcohol and enflamed with ardor they are no longer masters of themselves.

714 "War dress includes feathers in the hair and a sort of cross of Saint Andrew formed of cloth rolled and crossed on the chest. Weapons, quivers, arrows, crossbows, bucklers, spears and swords complete their equipment.

naturally be "water." These two elements, opposed though they are 593
to one another, nonetheless go together. If you should happen to 647
raise your voice, see to it that it does not reach the ears of your 565
neighbors who will be sure to laugh at your domestic misunderstanding.
There is a good way to appease your anger: that is to go out and get
some fresh air. A moment of distraction will calm your irritation.
This precious and effective remedy is called, according to a Laotian
expression, "to caress one's heart with a hand drenched with fresh
water."

On a walk and on a visit.--Formerly it used to be considered 574
a disgrace for a mandarin to go for a walk by himself or to visit minor 647
functionaries. Nowadays this is no longer the case. A Laotian 565
Minister goes out alone without being accompanied by the traditional 178
retinue. He visits all classes of society without being criticized for
it by anyone at all.

At a private gathering.--In contrast to the customs of former
times, present-day mandarins accept the invitation of a simple
citizen. The host very often organizes various diversions: dances, /533/
lamvong, orchestras, songs etc. The Ministers willingly participate /535/
in these; they sing, dance, and pay their respects to the phousaos
while they mingle with the crowd. Certain Laotians whom I consider
backward criticize the liberal manner on the part of our Ministers.
Our great mandarins are their own masters. Let them turn a deaf
ear to these carpings. /978/

Honor Laotian Women

Some people consider the Laotian woman as an inferior 562
creature.

Certain women, it appears, are not permitted to eat with
their husband. Miserable husbands! You consider then that your
better half is like an animal?

Certainly, tradition says: "The woman must sleep with her /513/
head lower than her husband's. She must go to bed after him and
she must get up before him. The husband must have eaten three /264/
mouthfuls of rice before the wife can begin to eat in her turn."

These counsels of our fathers are valuable, but they are far
from indicating that the woman is inferior to the man. They recommend,

538 inscriptions, some of which go back to the fourteenth century and are [172] in the Laotian language. For the earlier period we have seen above that these inscriptions were either in Sanskrit or in Khmer (Cf. Stele of Sayfong, appendix: Vientiane).

Music

533 Laotian songs belong to the field of poetry and are of two kinds:
538 the one consists of poems celebrating the exploits of legendary heroes,
883 transmitted from father to child, from master to pupil, and often expanded by imaginary improvisations; the others embroider the love theme.

[86] Alternate chants are used, particularly in the courts of love. A young girl sings, a boy answers. These songs have become a traditional game whose social function has been forgotten. They consist of a series of questions and answers. Often the questions are even real puzzles or simple guessing questions. By asking each other questions, the young people try to get to know each other.

It seems as if the origin could be found here of what the Indians call the svayamvara which is the choice of the husband by the woman. This custom is very persistent among the white Thai of the Phongtho region.

534 While vocal music is very prevalent in Laos, there exists also instrumental music which should not be neglected. We summarize here the excellent account given by his Highness Tiao Souvanna Phouma on Laotian music.

"There are three kinds of instruments: a) wind (the khouy and the khene), b) string (the So I and the So O), c) percussion (the Nang Nat and the Khong Vong).

The khene consists of a series of thin bamboos of various and decreasing lengths placed side by side in pairs like the flutes of Pan. Usually these are in seven consecutive rows. These bamboos are joined together by two half gourds attached with wax which form the blowing chamber and have a small circular opening to serve as mouthpiece. On the inside, the bamboos are pierced with holes. The most curious thing about the way the khene functions is that several notes are simultaneous and are absolutely continuous.

The khouy is a flute without any keys, generally made of bamboo and giving very clear tones.

The so, violins with two strings, consist of a long carved wooden handle and a sounding box. [87] The latter is a half coconut closed by

a thin wooden plate for the So O, or a simple cylinder of may dou 534
whose extremity has a stretched boa skin for the So I.

The So Bang is nothing but a bamboo tube in a crude handle. Its register is small, and it is never used in an orchestra.

In all these violins, the bow is made of animal hair and passes between the strings.

Among the percussion instruments, the Nang Nat or Rang Nat is the most popular. It is a real xylophone and is made of wooden plates of different thicknesses suspended above a boat-shaped concave piece of wood which forms the sounding box.

The Khong Vong consists of sixteen bronze cymbals arranged on a semicircular frame made of rattan. In order to play these two instruments the musician uses two mallets whose head is made of elephant skin for the Khong Vong with which he strikes the keys by sliding them over the latter.

The Laotian orchestra has two forms: 1st) the Seb Noi or Ma Ho Ry consisting of several So, a varying number of khene, a Rang Nat, a Khong Vong and tambourines. The role of the Seb Noi is to accompany in an undertone a chorus or a solo; 2nd) the Seb Gnai (yai) is made up of the same instruments as the Seb Noi. Along with the so and the khene it also includes some large drums and a sort of clarinet or pi. This orchestra never accompanies singing. Its place is in the royal retinue or in a religious procession. Occasionally it is used in war dances of an episode taken from the Ramayana.

The performers always play from memory. Musicians are educated purely by ear and by intelligence.

[88] Laotian music uses only the octave with seven tones corres- 533
ponding to the scale of a khene. There are a variety of tunes composed by individual musicians whose names are lost. At the present day the most popular is the Lam Vong.

The Theatre

With more ballet and pantomime than real theatre, the Laotian 536
theatre, just as in Cambodia, is an intimate and complicated assembly of literature and music with orchestra and chorus, mimed scenes, dance and dialogue. The subjects of the classical theatre played at court are drawn from the Ramayana or other equally popular local works. The drama is presented with gestures learned and regulated beforehand, since each of the plastic phrases expressed by the actor or actress has necessarily a length determined by that of the musical phrase played by the orchestra or sung by the chorus.